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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not periodicals would be useful in motivating low performing sixth grade readers. Two groups of remedial reading students from a New Jersey suburb were studied over a four month period. The control group was taught reading skills using conventional materials such as novels and short stories. The experimental group was taught reading skills using periodicals in addition to the conventional materials. Consistent with previous research, both groups demonstrated a decrease in reading motivation by the end of the treatment period. However, the experimental group showed less of a decrease than the control group, indicating that although the periodicals did not have a positive affect on reading attitudes, it may have prevented student attitudes from declining further. Contains 37 references and 2 tables of data; appendixes contain the survey instrument and raw data. (Author/RS)

The Effect of Utilizing Periodicals to Increase Motivation in Sixth Grade Remedial Reading Students

by
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not periodicals would be useful in motivating low performing sixth grade readers. Two groups of remedial reading students from a New Jersey suburb were studied over a four month period. The control group was taught reading skills using conventional materials such as novels and short stories. The experimental group was taught reading skills using periodicals in addition to the conventional materials. Consistent with previous research, both groups demonstrated a decrease in reading motivation by the end of the treatment period. However, the experimental group showed less of a decrease than the control group, indicating that although the periodicals did not have a positive affect on reading attitudes, it may have prevented student attitudes from declining further.

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"There are two goals for every reading program: 1) to teach children how to read, and 2) to make them want to read." (Cullinan, 1987). Research in the affective domain of reading suggests that students who have a positive attitude about reading tasks tend to read more often, for longer intervals of time, and with greater concentration. According to Ames and Archer (1988), "students who perceive reading as valuable and important and who have personally relevant reasons for reading will engage in reading in a more planned and effortful manner." Students who experience this deeper engagement with the text tend to be more successful readers and superior students. In the same way, students who view reading in a negative way, tend to labor more with reading tasks. These students may attempt to avoid reading or read only when pressured. This may explain why, in an official poll conducted by the National Reading Research Center, teachers ranked motivating students and arousing an interest in reading as their first priority (Guthrie et al., 1997).

Motivating remedial students to read can be especially challenging for a classroom teacher. The disabled reader often brings negative past experiences with print to the text. These students read word by word and as a process of decoding rather than as a way to derive meaning from the printed material. Remedial readers often become discouraged in their attempts to "sound it out," and in the process, become detached from the text (Collins, 1999). These disengaged readers usually lack the motivation to want to know the ending of a story and do not view reading as enjoyable. According to Guthrie (1997), "less successful students lose their intrinsic motivations for reading due to their eroding sense of confidence." As a result, remedial students are not learning to read or reading to learn.

Research indicates that remedial readers, in particular, need relevant experiences with print. Fuchs (1987) explains that the weak reader "has often been so far removed from reading as a tool for living and learning, that he or she has given up. By helping students find personal reasons to

engage in print, you help them realize the ultimate goal of reading – that of constructing personal meaning." Therefore, it is essential to create a classroom environment "where students feel confident in their abilities and personally invested in the content" (Guthrie et. al, 1997). Remedial readers need methods which will help them to feel like successful, purposeful readers.

One method which has been successful with low achieving students uses newspapers as a means to teach reading skills. Ammann and Mittelsteadt (1987) recount how they successfully utilized newspapers in their reading program to break the failure cycle for a group of unmotivated high school remedial readers. These teachers found that, "creative uses of the daily newspaper produced a remarkable change in students' attitudes and their reading achievement." After implementing the newspapers into reading instruction, classroom behaviors and reading attitudes improved. Students demonstrated working knowledge of reading to find out who, what, when, where, why, and how in articles.

Teachers noticed an improvement in paraphrasing and summarizing skills. Students participated more in classroom discussions, and they began seeking information from the newspapers without being prompted by their teacher.

Guthrie, Alao, & Rinehart (1997) describe Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) another approach which has been proven successful for use in engaging low-achieving adolescents in literacy activities and increasing intrinsic motivation. CORI consists of seven facets including real-world observation, conceptual theory, strategy instruction, self-directed learning, collaboration, self-expression, and coherence. Students are first exposed to a real world observation designed to spark their interest in a topic. Students work in teams to formulate questions about the topic they wish to pursue. The teacher guides them by providing strategy instruction to help them answer their questions. This may involve directing students to sources that can help them obtain information. Students collaborate by helping each other to answer questions and deciding how

to proceed with their investigation. Teams then decide how they will present their results. Some possibilities include creating a chart, picture, poster, or narrative about their topic.

Hypothesis

To add to the body of information, the following study was undertaken to determine whether or not the use of periodicals had any appreciable effect on sixth grade remedial readers' motivation to read. This study was designed to learn whether magazines could be an effective motivator for low performing adolescents. It was hypothesized that no appreciable effects would be discernable.

This study was conducted at Somerset School in a suburb of New Jersey. Somerset is a unique school attended only by sixth graders of diverse ethnic groups. The students change classes for each subject and are given instruction in study skills and foreign languages in order to prepare them for the middle school. Many students find the adjustment

challenging, but most emerge from the experience well prepared. Students are homogeneously grouped by ability in language arts and mathematics only as indicated by standardized tests and past performance.

Procedures

Two samples of remedial reading students were identified and assigned randomly to experimental and control treatments for this study. The experimental group consisted of 20 sixth grade students, and the control group was comprised of 15 students.

All students were then given the Short Form Reading Attitude Survey (Tunnell, Calder, & Justen, 1988) to determine their attitudes toward reading. Students responded to the items on a five point scale: 1 indicating they strongly disagree; 5 indicating they strongly agree. Sample items include, "Reading is an important part of my life," "Reading makes me feel good," and "I read often in my spare time."

Students in the control group were taught reading skills using novels, short stories, poems, and plays as the primary instructional materials. Students in the experimental group were taught reading skills using novels, short stories, poems, plays, and periodicals.

Students were given a choice of periodicals from a selection the teacher had deemed appropriate to their reading ability and conducive to the planned activities. An introductory lesson was presented to familiarize the students with the layout of a magazine. Students examined the table of contents, feature articles, advice columns, and other components of the periodicals. In the following lessons, the teacher introduced who, what, when, where, why, and how questions and had the students read to answer those questions in their articles. Vocabulary was taught in the context of the articles. Students highlighted challenging words and were given a chart where they had to write their definition of the word and then consult a dictionary to compare their answers. Students were also taught the

concepts of summarizing and paraphrasing and were asked to apply this skill when reading the periodicals. The teacher also discussed fact and opinion and introduced the concept of bias. Students were also required to write a magazine article for the school magazine, which would later be considered for inclusion in the spring issue.

Upon completion of this study, all students were given the reading attitude survey again to determine the significance of the difference between the means, on changes in attitude as a result of the instructional difference. Surveys were then hand scored by the teacher, and conclusions were drawn about whether or not the use of periodicals had any effect on the students' motivation to read as measured by the survey.

Results

To derive the mean scores, the raw score was divided by 18, the amount of items on the survey. Results of the survey given in October, before the intervention, indicate an overall

experimental group mean score of 3.23, which corresponds to a neutral to mildly favorable attitude towards reading tasks. The control group mean was 3.25, which also corresponds to a neutral to mildly favorable attitude towards reading tasks. The t obtained was -.09 which denotes a negligible difference between the experimental and control group mean scores.

Table 1 - Short Form Reading Attitude Survey Pretest

Sample	Mean(raw score)	SD	t
Experimental	58.20 (3.23)	14.59	-.09
Control	58.67 (3.25)	15.26	

N>

Results of the attitude survey posttest given in February, after the intervention of the use of periodicals, indicate an experimental group mean score of 2.97 and a control group mean of 2.83. Both of these scores correspond to a neutral to mildly unfavorable attitude toward reading tasks. The derived t was .46 which indicates a non significant difference between the means.

Table 2 - Short Form Reading Attitude Survey Posttest

Sample	Mean(raw score)	SD	t
Experimental	53.6 (2.97)	15.33	.46
Control	51.0 (2.83)	17.26	

NS

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study indicate that in both groups, reading attitudes became poorer during the four month study, and this was despite the intervention used with the experimental group. These results supported the hypothesis that no attitude difference as a result of the intervention would be discernable.

However disheartening, this study coincides with previous research which reports that students' attitudes toward reading deteriorate as they progress through each grade level. Tunnell, Calder, and Phaup (1988) describe a study by Johnson (1965) who studied four elementary schools in Oregon and reported students in higher grades showed poorer attitudes than students in lower grades. This is

consistent with a study by Neale and Proshek (1967) who noted increasing negative reading attitudes from grades four to grades six.

It is worth noting, however, that the experimental group experienced less of a decrease in reading attitudes than the control group, which may be due to the intervention. Furthermore, the teacher noted that, while the survey indicated a decrease in reading attitudes, students in the experimental group exhibited positive motivational signs during the treatment. One student often asked, "When are we going to use the magazines again?" and students seemed genuinely engaged in the related activities. When asked about the experience at the conclusion of the study, a student commented, "I never knew I could learn so much from a magazine." Another student added, "I usually read stuff just to answer the questions at the end. With the magazines, I read because I wanted to know more about the article." Other students asked to take the subscription forms from the magazines so they could order their own copies.

There is no question that reading teachers need to present information in a meaningful way in order to motivate readers of all ages and abilities. We know that adolescents who are poor readers face compounded challenges when they approach print. Using periodicals may be one effective tool for enhancing motivation during this critical time in their development of reading attitudes.

Motivating Readers
Related Literature and Research

O'Flahavan (1992) denotes that in a survey of reading teachers and specialists, motivational research emerged as the area that should receive the most attention during this decade. Most surveyed reported that fostering a lifelong desire to read and understanding how teachers and parents can improve reading attitudes should be a top priority in all classrooms. Perhaps this is why in an official poll by the National Reading Research Center, teachers ranked reading motivation as their greatest priority in a list of 99 options

Why are reading attitudes so crucial? The Commission on Reading in *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, et al., 1985, p. 77) reports that recreational reading by elementary students is "the best predictor of reading comprehension, vocabulary size, and gains in reading achievement between the second and fifth grade." Anderson, Fielding, & Wilson (1988), have studied the links between motivation and achievement and have concluded that, "children who make positive associations with reading tend to read more often, for longer periods of time, and with greater intensity. This deeper

engagement translates into superior reading achievement" (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 470).

In the past, the focus has been on comprehension and not on the affective domain of reading. According to Gentile & McMillan (1977, p. 649), "part of the problem of developing students' interest in reading is a direct result of persistently posing the question, 'Why can't they read?'" Programs have centered on diagnosis and remediation, disregarding the importance of the students' desire to pursue literacy tasks. This is surprising, considering a study by Anderson, Shirley, Wilson, and Fielding (1987) who reported that, "interest in reading material is thirty times more powerful than readability in determining or predicting a student's ability to comprehend a passage" (Tunnell, Calder, Justen, & Phaup, 1988, p. 238).

According to Summers (1977), many tools had been developed, at that time, to assess reading skills, but relatively little had been done to measure reading attitudes and motivation. Henk (1995) offers a reason for the lack of

implements necessary for examining this area of reading. He explains that, "because affect tends to be difficult to measure, the tools necessary to make truly valid appraisals have not been available" (p. 470). Recently however, educators and reading specialists have begun to recognize that a child's desire to read is equally important to acquiring reading skills, and several adequate tools have been created to meet this need.

One implement used to assess reading attitudes is the Short Form Reading Attitude Survey, an 18 item questionnaire developed by Tunnell, Calder, and Justen in 1988. The survey is intended for use with students in grades 2-6. Students respond to statements such as, "Reading is an important part of my life," using a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Results of a field test using 508 students grades 2-6 in Arkansas and Illinois reveal that attitudes become consistently poorer as students get older. In addition, independent t tests were run in order to pinpoint where

specific changes were occurring. Significant t's were evident between the third and fourth grade and between the fifth and sixth grade.

McKenna and Kear developed the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS), an instrument used with grades 1 through 6, that measures elementary students' attitudes toward school based and recreational forms of reading. This survey uses a pictoral format depicting the popular cartoon character, Garfield, in four poses from very happy to very upset. The creator felt that this layout would be appealing and easily understood by very young students. The survey is intended to be used to determine attitudes of specific students or as a group profile to monitor the motivational impact of a new or existing reading strategy.

The Reader Self Perception Scale was created by Henk and Melnick in 1995. The 33 item scale is based on Bandura's theory of perceived self-efficacy. "Bandura defines self-efficacy as a person's judgments of her or his ability to perform an activity, and the effect this perception has on the

on-going and future conduct of the activity" (Henk & Melnick, 1995, p. 471). This scale can be used to elicit information in four aspects of reading motivation: Progress, Observational Comparison, Social Feedback, and Physiological States.

The Motivation to Read Profile, developed by Linda Gambrell et al. (1996) consists of a 20 item group administered survey and conversational interview. The survey uses a four point response scale which varies depending on the question. The interview is designed to provide the teacher with additional insights into students' reading attitudes. When field tested, Cronbach's (1951) alpha statistic revealed a moderately high reliability for both facets of the survey.

How does a motivated reader approach print? According to Guthrie (1997, p. 439), "motivated students try to figure out how new information fits with what they already know; they discriminate important information from unimportant; they regulate effort, planning, and goal setting and actively monitor their comprehension" (Entwistle &

Ramsden, 1983; Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990). Gambrell et al. (1996, p. 518) state that, "highly motivated readers are self-determining and generate their own reading opportunities." These readers have a desire to read and seek printed material because they are curious and receive emotional satisfaction from the written word.

Three types of motivation goals have been identified in earlier research to describe different ways students function in various learning situations (Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliot & Dweck, 1988; Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988; and Nolen, 1988). Students who exhibit task mastery goal orientation, the most desirable of the three, focus on self-improvement and learning new material to increase competence in an area. Students with predominantly ego social goals are concerned with outdoing others and achieving only to obtain a favorable opinion from their peers. Students who demonstrate a work-avoidant goal orientation have a get-it-done attitude. These students do not aim to work or think very hard when completing tasks.

What determines motivation? Researchers agree that the classroom environment can elicit different goal orientations (Ames, 1992; Meece, 1991, Nicholls, 1983, 1989; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990). When students feel competent and responsible for their own learning they are more likely to demonstrate task mastery goal characteristics. However, when students feel pressured to compete against their peers for grades, recognition, and rewards, they are likely to be concerned with failure and exhibit the ego-social goal orientation. Exceedingly structured classroom environments that underscore rote learning can invoke a work-avoidant orientation.

Summers (1977) says that although cognitive traits may decide the student's developmental limits, it is their attitude which affects whether or not the students aim to reach their potential. Therefore, when examining factors related to reading motivation, it is useful to consider the concepts of *self perceived competence* and *task value* as primary components of motivation and task engagement. Research studies (Paris

& Oka, 1986; Schunk, 1985) indicate that "students who believe they are capable and competent readers are more likely to outperform those who do not hold such beliefs" (Gambrell et al., 1996, p. 518). This coincides with Eccles (1983) expectancy-value theory on motivation which asserts that one's motivation is linked to their beliefs about whether they will fail or succeed at a task and whether or not they view the task as worthwhile.

"If achievement is indeed driven by motivation, then the fostering of positive student attitudes toward reading seems paramount" (Tunnell, Calder, Justen, & Phaup, 1988, p. 238). This can be particularly challenging for the remedial reading teacher. Remedial readers are often caught in a cycle of failure. The reader is often unmotivated because they very rarely meet reading challenges with success. However, it is competence that fosters positive attitudes. According to Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan (1991), competence beliefs and intrinsic motivation for literacy activities are closely linked. When students feel proficient at a task, their motivation to

continue is increased. "Less successful students lose their motivation due to their eroding sense of confidence" (Guthrie, Alao, & Rhinehart, 1997, p. 440).

According to Collins (1999), "readers who have negative experiences with reading generally view reading as a process of getting the word right rather than making sense of the material." Ammann and Mittelsteadt (1987) identified three patterns that impede the remedial students' performance in reading. First, they disregard words that are not immediately recognizable. Also, they read word by word and usually do not derive meaning from the printed word. Finally, they do not spend enough time reading and attempting to comprehend the material.

Collins (1999) asserts that "the disabled reader has often been so far removed from reading as a tool for living and learning, that he or she has given up." The remedial reader is therefore caught in a cycle of failure that often renders them frustrated and indifferent toward reading tasks. These unmotivated remedial readers are not learning to read or

reading to learn. Therefore, motivating these low performing students is a prerequisite to improved reading performance.

Remedial readers face additional challenges as they enter adolescence. Research indicates that students' interest in reading weakens as they progress through each grade level (Langer, Applebee, Mullis, and Foertsch, 1990). Studies by Anderman & Young (1994), and Eccles & Midgley (1989), indicate that students' motivation for literacy and their interest in other academic subjects declines at middle grade levels.

Gentile & McMillan (1977, p. 650) describe complicating factors which contribute to the "reluctant reader syndrome," which seems to emerge as students become teenagers. First, these students may equate reading with failing and have never derived any pleasure from reading. Further, many teens prefer to experience life directly rather than vicariously through books. Adolescent students are sometimes incapable of sitting for long periods of time and have trouble attending to prolonged reading tasks.

Adolescence is also a time of excessive self-absorption. Teens become immersed in personal problems, family responsibilities, and emerging sexual issues, which hinder their concentration on academics. Another characteristic of adolescent readers is that they tend to become disengaged when activities are not amusing and entertaining. These students tend to focus on extrinsic, not intrinsic rewards derived from reading.

Another complicating factor is that some students have grown up in an environment devoid of reading materials and opportunities. In addition, reading is often viewed by teens as an "anti-social activity." Students at this age are constantly seeking respect from peers and will avoid reading in an attempt to conform to the group. Lastly, some adolescents will immediately discount reading simply because adults endorse it.

Considering the challenges to young adolescent remedial readers, it is easy to see why motivating these students can be a formidable task. Therefore, it is essential

to examine the needs of the adolescent remedial reader in order to construct a classroom environment that meets their motivational needs.

First and foremost, researchers agree these readers need relevant experiences with print. Fuchs (1987) recommends that teachers should be sure to make careful book choices that mirror the interests of adolescents. Gentile & McMillan suggest providing a variety of reading material and allowing students to choose based on their own personal preferences. These authors further suggest that teachers should also get pupils out of their seats to engage in applicable reading found in craft books, mechanics magazines, and recipes. This creates an interest and purpose for reading. The authors further suggest making readily available paperback books, newspapers, comic books, and magazines. Above all, teachers need to create educational situations "where students feel confident in their abilities and personally invested in the content" (Guthrie, Alao & Rinehart, 1997, p. 440).

Guthrie, Alao, & Rinehart (1997) describe Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI) an approach which has been proven successful for use in engaging low-achieving adolescents in literacy activities and increasing intrinsic motivation. CORI consists of seven facets including real-world observation, conceptual theory, strategy instruction, self-directed learning, collaboration, self-expression, and coherence. Students are first exposed to a real world observation designed to spark their interest in a topic. Students work in teams to formulate questions about the topic they wish to pursue. The teacher guides them by providing strategy instruction to help them answer their questions. This may involve directing students to sources that can help them obtain information. Students collaborate by helping each other to answer questions and deciding how to proceed with their investigation. Teams then decide how they will present their results. Some possibilities include creating a chart, picture, poster, or narrative about their topic.

Amman and Mittelsteadt (1987) successfully utilized newspapers to motivate low performing students with negative attitudes toward reading. After implementing the newspapers into reading instruction, classroom behaviors and reading attitudes improved. Students demonstrated working knowledge of reading to find out who, what, when, where, why, and how in articles. Teachers noticed an improvement in paraphrasing and summarizing skills. Students participated more in classroom discussions, and they began seeking information from the newspapers without being prompted by their teacher.

Educators and researchers agree that the only way to improve reading skills is to read. By understanding the factors which affect reading motivation and examining some programs that have been proven successful motivators, educators can learn how to adapt their own classrooms so they too can produce lifelong readers and learners.

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Appendices

Appendix A
Short Form Reading Attitude Survey
(Tunnell, Calder, & Justen, 1988)

1. Reading is an important part of my life.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

2. I read often in my spare time.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

3. Reading is my favorite subject in school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

4. I would rather read a book than draw a picture.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

5. I like to buy books and have a place to keep them at home.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

6. When I find the kind of books I like, reading can be fun.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

7. I like free reading time in school.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

8. I like to find library books to read.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

9. Reading school books is a waste of time.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

10. I would like to belong to a book club.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

11. Reading makes me feel good.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

12. I dislike reading because most of the time I am being forced to read.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

13. Reading is a fun way of learning.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

14. I like to read before I go to bed.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

15. I often find extra books or stories to read about something which interests me.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

16. I like to look through the books at the library.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

17. Reading is boring.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

18. I usually read several books during the summer vacation.

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree				strongly agree

Appendix B
Reading Attitude Survey Results
Pre and Post Intervention
Experimental Group

Student #	Pre raw score	Pre mean	Post raw score	Post mean
4	28	1.6	36	2
3	34	1.9	32	1.8
9	42	2.3	34	1.9
20	46	2.5	35	1.9
2	47	2.6	55	3.1
18	47	2.6	44	2.4
6	50	2.8	38	2.1
5	54	3	60	3.3
19	54	3	43	2.4
7	56	3.1	70	3.9
17	60	3.3	70	3.9
13	60	3.3	53	2.9
14	66	3.7	51	2.8
12	66	3.7	42	2.3
15	69	3.8	68	3.8
8	71	3.9	70	3.9
10	72	4	76	4.2
16	74	4.1	51	2.8
1	77	4.3	64	3.6
11	81	4.5	80	4.4

total students
20

Appendix C
Reading Attitude Survey Results
Pre and Post Intervention
Control Group

Student #	Pre raw score	Pre mean	Post raw score	Post mean
1	34	1.9	69	3.8
6	34	1.9	33	1.8
3	44	2.4	51	2.8
14	49	2.7	37	2.1
2	50	2.8	20	1.1
15	52	2.9	58	3.2
12	54	3	55	3.1
5	58	3.2	38	2.1
13	62	3.4	absent	
10	62	3.4	33	1.8
11	73	4.1	85	4.7
8	74	4.1	66	3.5
7	76	4.2	58	3.2
9	78	4.3	51	2.8
4	80	4.4	60	3.3

Total students
15

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